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From Bishop Horne's Discourses.

"THE grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men." St. Paul here declares the origin, universality, and general intent of the gospel. It was not a production of earth, it came from above; it was the grace or gift of God. As a gift we may conclude it given, like other gifts, for the benefit of the receivers. As the gift of him, who is the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation, it must be calculated to diffuse mercy and comfort among his creatures. Offspring of that Being who "is love," it could never be intended to produce hatred in the hearts of which it should take possession. Proceeding from the God of holiness and of life, it was not designed to be the means of enlarging the empire of sin and death.

It came, "bringing salvation" or deliverance from every enemy; and it came to all, without distinction of sex, or age, country or condition. It appeared, shone forth, manifesting itself by its own splendour, like the day-spring from on high, like the light of the morning when the sun ariseth, free, bright, universal; author of light and life, of joy and gladness, and hailed as such by all things in Heaven and earth. It

came to dispel ignorance as darkness, to disseminate knowledge as light, to inform and instruct mankind, taking us into training, and putting us under discipline, in the school of a Divine Master, who teacheth us to avoid evil, and to pursue good; and who alone can enable us to do either with effect. The perfection of a law would afford but small comfort to those living under it, if they could not observe it, and must perish for transgressing it. Men stood in need of other things; they stood in need of pardon for their past errors, and a renewal of their powers unto future obedience. Here is the glory of the gospel. This is the triumph of "the grace of God," which by the gospel "hath appeared unto all men."

"Teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts"—denying, disclaiming, renouncing, forsaking impiety, every species of irreligion, either disbelief of a deity, or mistaken notions of his nature, attributes of Providence, and of the manner in which he is to be worshipped, with all the enormous and abominable practices consequent thereupon. The actions of men must always take a deep tincture from the colour of their religious or irreligious principles. He who believes in a Deity, of whatever kind, will endeavour to please by imitating him, and he who believes in none, like the poor demoniac in the

gospel, easily bursts all other bands, neither can any man hold him.

‘Ungodliness and worldly lusts’—Worldly lusts or desires, are desires where objects are worldly, and by worldly men coveted and sought after, by undue means, or in a disorderly manner, beyond the limits designed and appointed by God and nature. Let not vain man then, under the notion and name of philosophy, insult and revile, as a monkish and solitary principle, that doctrine on which the Son of God has thought proper to lay the deep foundations of his religion, the doctrine of self-denial—In the present state of human nature, the desires of self are frequently the sickly cravings of a distempered being; the gratification of them would tend only to increase and inflame the disease; and therefore, by our heavenly physician, we are in mercy enjoined to “deny” them. All he requesteth of us, is, to consult our own happiness and that of others, and if we are commanded to renounce worldly lusts, it is because they have deluged the earth with sin and sorrow.

“Having denied ungodliness and worldly lusts,” we are to live, in the first place, “soberly.” The noun signifies one that has a *sound mind*, one that is master of himself, having his appetites and passions in due order and subjection. If we consider sobriety as implying the regulation of our appetites, it supplies us with the virtues of temperance, as opposed to intemperance, and industry as opposed to sloth.

But sobriety goes further. It comprehends the government, not of the bodily appetites only, but of the passions and affections of the mind. Christianity informs us of the proper objects on which the passions should be fixed, and enables us to fix them on those objects. Upon this

principle, the gospel where it is received, moderates and regulates the passions, in their application to terrestrial objects. It restrains the sallies of anger, that it sin not, and stops the issues of dislike; it forbids presumption in hope, and bridles the impetuosity of desire; it balances the mind in every state and fortune; it produces modesty, meekness, candour, impartiality, and out of these ingredients, forms that sobriety of character intended by the Apostle. Destitute of this, what is the world, as agitated by human passions, let loose without restraint in their fury, but the troubled sea, with the four winds striving on it for the mastery, where all is froth and foam, noise and confusion.

“We should live soberly, and righteously,” or justly, giving to all their due. What that due is, the gospel hath ascertained, not by a system of rules only, but by infusing a principle which reduces the law to a compend, and teaches the whole at once in its utmost extent. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.” “Whatsoever, ye would that men should do unto you, do ye so even unto them.”

“And godly.” This word conveys the idea of every thing that relates to the acknowledgment and worship of God, devotion, piety or religion, properly so called, as distinguished from morality. Here it is that we must look for the main-spring and principle of action; for motives to virtue, capable of controlling the appetites, regulating the passions, and overcoming every obstacle, objected by self-love, to the practice of justice and self-love among men.

There is a connexion between religion and morality, like that between soul and body, not to be dissolved without the death of the lat-

ter. Speculative men may amuse themselves, and others, by disquisitions on the beauty of virtue, and the relations of things independently of the will of God, and the motives suggested by the scriptures. Virtue without doubt is beautiful, and there are relations of things, with corresponding duties resulting from them. But will these considerations charm to rest the eager appetites and turbulent passions of human nature in its present condition? "As well might you think to bind an hungry tyger with a thread."

Yet it has been objected to the gospel, that by confining a man's views to himself and his spiritual concerns, it causeth him to slight the social affections, as things appertaining to this world, and of little moment. The reverse is the truth—A discharge of all the social duties in the world, is by the gospel pointed out, as the way to promote true selfinterest, and to obtain salvation in the world to come. For the performance of these duties, the doctrines of christianity supply new motives, and the grace which accompanies it endues us with new powers.

Another objection is, that christianity seems often, not only to have failed in its design of removing evils from society, but to have been itself the cause of introducing some of the worst.

The gospel indeed has not always produced its proper effects. 'Thro' whose fault has this happened? God gave religion, as he gave the earth to man, that in peace and comfort he might cultivate and reap the fruits of it. Instead of so doing, man lays it waste, and drenches it in blood. Can we blame God, or the earth, or religion? No. To man alone the blame is due; on man alone then, let it be laid.

The gospel has not always produced its proper effects. It was foretold that it would not. Nothing has fallen out new; nothing contrary to the expectation of its Divine Author, or his servants. Christianity would have all men to be temperate, sober, pure, industrious, meek, peaceable, just and loving; in which case paradise would again spring up among us, and earth would be a lively image of heaven. In one word, were it perfectly obeyed, it would establish the happiness that is attainable here below; and to it, imperfectly as it is practised, is owing the quietness, security and good order that a great part of the world now enjoys.

But after all, the argument against religion, drawn from the bad conduct of its professors, though not conclusive, will always be prevalent, and though many good answers may be given to it, the best of all would be to forsake our sins, and amend our ways. Our good actions would then speak for us, and wipe off the imputation cast upon our faith. We are not, it may be said, in these days to expect a return of the golden age of religion. But this may be said, and said with truth, that we know not what may be done till we have made the experiment; that it is in every man's power to take off his share of the objection, and if every man were to do so, the whole would be removed.

Let us then awake, and call all the world to awake with us to righteousness. It is righteousness which "exalteth a nation." Do we desire to live in felicity, and would we fain see good days? Would the master have his servant honest and observant? Would the parent have his child dutiful and grateful? Would every man have his friend faithful and kind? his neighbour benevolent

and charitable? Let all without delay, become in truth disciples of the holy Jesus, and take away his reproach among men, by studying to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, in all things." But chiefly let the clergy, who are ordained to the administration, and set for the defence of the gospel, shew forth, not only with their lips, but in their lives, the praises of him who hath brought us to his marvellous light, and appointed them to publish the glad tidings of his salvation to the sons of men. Religion, bad as the times were supposed and feared to be, hath not wanted friends among the governors of Israel, who willingly offered themselves to stand forth in her cause. The fences of the vineyard have been happily secured. Let the vine yield its produce grateful to God and man, that while some are 'plants grown up in their youth,' others may 'bring forth more fruit in their age.' "So let thy work, O Lord, appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto thy children. And the glorious majesty of the Lord our God, be upon us. Prosper thou the work of our hand upon us. O prosper thou our handy-work."

A part of Bishop Wilson's Sermon on the text

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth."

THOUGH the wind be invisible, yet we find the effects of it very plainly, and in a thousand ways. In like manner, tho' the Spirit of God, be not seen by men, yet he can produce great and astonishing effects, in those to whom he is communicated. He will enable them to subdue their corruptions, he will en-

lighten their understandings, he will change their hearts; in short, if they do not grieve, and resist him, and thus drive him from them, he will fit them for that happiness which God designed to bestow upon them.

If we continue in the state in which we are born, we are certainly undone, and we can be saved only by the Spirit of God—By grace ye are saved—baptism is indeed the ordinary means of salvation, but baptism does not save us, as it is the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience, bearing witness that we have the Spirit of God. Nothing short of becoming new creatures can fit us for Heaven; and nothing but the Spirit of God, communicated to us in his holy ordinances, can make us new creatures—"Except a person," said our blessed Saviour, "be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Those things then are true, if the Holy Scriptures be true, but yet, how are they overlooked, neglected, and despised, by the careless and profane, who will believe nothing but what they can see with their own eyes, or what is agreeable to their own corrupt taste of things.

It is true we are to live by faith and not by sight. We are to make use of the means of grace which God has ordained, and we are to depend upon his word and promise to bestow the grace, which he has assured us shall attend his ordinances. I pray you for ever to remember, what the word of God, as well as our own sad experience assures us—that we are born in sin—that we are by nature liable to the wrath of God—that of ourselves we are not able to think one good thought—and are not able to help ourselves out of this sad condition.

But then God, of his infinite mercy, has delivered us out of this sad estate. We are reconciled unto him, by the death of his Son; who, in order that he may fit us for Heaven and happiness, hath appointed several ordinances, in the due use of which we may certainly expect the assistance of his Spirit, to renew our nature and restore us to the image of God.

And although these ordinances and the instruments he makes use of, have no manner of virtue in themselves to renew our nature and to restore us to the favour of God; and though the power that accompanies them, be invisible as the wind, yet the effect and blessing that attends the due use of them is as certain as that God is true.

Thus he has appointed certain persons, men of like infirmities with yourselves, to be his ministers or stewards. To them he has committed the word of reconciliation, and the several ordinances which he has appointed to make it effectual. By virtue of this commission, they baptize your children, by which they are made members of Christ's church, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of Heaven.

By virtue of the same commission, they endeavour to fit them for confirmation, that they may thereby receive the Holy Spirit, by which they may be enabled to pass thro' a corrupt world, and to escape from their most powerful enemies. And, lastly, because, by reason of the frailty of our nature, we are but too apt to fall; by virtue of this commission, these ministers of Christ administer unto them the body and blood of Christ, by which alone the truly penitent obtain the remission of their sins.

Now because these ministers of God, are men, like yourselves, will

you despise their ministry, and the favours which are offered to you by their hands, and refuse to be reconciled unto God by their means? Will you despise the ordinances of God, because the graces that attend them are invisible? Because some profane person may say. What signifies a little water? refuse to have your children baptized! Or because another as ignorant and profane, shall ask you, What will you be the better for the Bishop's blessing and the laying of his hands upon you? will you despise confirmation tho' it be an apostolic institution? Because, bread and wine are common things, and every body can take and eat and drink of them, will you therefore despise these creatures, when they are consecrated in the Lord's Supper, by his ministers appointed thereunto?

And are there not many holy persons, who, by the use of these ordinances, being rescued out of the power, and snare of the devil, do very sensibly perceive the work of the Spirit of God in their hearts, and the fruits of it in their lives? On the other hand are there not men given up to a reprobate mind, who are incapable of advice and commit all iniquity with greediness? The latter are as much in their senses, and on other subjects as capable of serious reflection as good men. Yet, although they have heard it over and over and over again, that eternal misery is likely to be their portion, they go on without fear and without concern—And wherefore? Because they have grieved the good Spirit of the Lord; He has forsaken them, and the wicked Spirit has taken possession of them; and because they have driven the Spirit of God, from them, and no longer feel his power in themselves, they therefore deride it in others,

they despise the ordinances of God, and would bring us back to the state of heathens who know not God. Let us then be careful not to grieve that Holy Spirit by which we are sanctified.

The success of the Gospel, and of all the means of Grace owing to a Divine Influence.

THE design of God in all his works of creation, providence and grace, is to advance and secure the glory of his own name; and therefore, though he make use of secondary causes as the instruments of his operations, yet their efficacy depends upon his superintending influence. It is his hand that sustains the great chain of causes and effects, and his agency pervades and animates the worlds of nature and grace. In the natural world, he makes use of the instrumentality of the husbandman to till the ground, to sow the seed, and water it. But it is he that commands the clouds to drop down fatness upon it, and the sun to diffuse its vital influence. It is He, that continues to the earth, and the other principles of vegetation, their respective virtues; and without this influence of his, the husbandman's planting and watering would be in vain; and after all his labour, he must acknowledge that it is God that giveth the increase.

So, in the world of grace, God uses a variety of suitable means to form degenerate sinners into his image, and fit them for a happy eternity. All the institutions of the gospel are intended for this purpose. Ministers are sowers sent out into the wide field of the world, with the precious seed of the word. It is the grand business of their life to cul-

tivate this barren soil, to plant trees of righteousness, and water them that they may bring forth the fruits of holiness. But they meet with disappointments enough to convince them that all their labours will be in vain, if a sovereign God deny the influences of his grace. The agency of his Holy Spirit is as necessary to fructify the word, and make it the seed of conversion, as the influences of heaven are to fructify the earth and promote vegetation. A zealous Paul may plant the word, and an eloquent Apollos may water it; one may attempt to convert sinners to christianity, and the other to build them up in the faith, but they are both nothing, as to the success of their labours, unless God afford the influence of his grace to render their attempts successful in begetting and cherishing living religion in the hearts of men. Neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

So barren is the soil, that the seed of the word falls upon it, and dies and never grows up, as though it had never been sown there, till it be fructified by divine grace. It is a soil fruitful of briars and thorns, which grow up and choke the word; so that it becometh unfruitful, till divine grace root them up. Or it may be represented by a rocky or stony soil, where the word of God can take no deep root, and therefore withers till it be mollified by influences from Heaven. The metaphors used in scripture sufficiently prove the degeneracy of mankind and their entire opposition to the gospel. They are represented as spiritually dead—2 Eph. 1; 5 John 25. And can a Paul or an Apollos quicken the dead with convictive arguments, with strong persuasions, or tender and passionate exposu-

lations? No, none but He can do it, whose Almighty voice bade Lazarus come forth. Sinners are also represented as blind—2 Cor. 4. 41. Now what can feeble mortals do to such. We can exhibit divine things before them, expose the horrid deformity of sin, and its tremendous consequences; we can display the glories of God, the beauty of holiness, and the beauties of redeeming love; but alas! all this is but like exposing colours to the blind. What can tender arguments avail to break hearts of stone? What signifies reasoning to govern headstrong obstinacy, which regards it no more than a whirlwind? What can persuasions do to extirpate inveterate, implacable enmity? What can the charms of eloquence do to charm deaf adders that stop their ears? It is the divine agency alone, that gives the success in all cases.

The gospel is designed to reclaim men from sin; but they are obstinately set upon it; it is designed to make sin bitter to them, and to dissolve their heart into tender sorrows for it; but we naturally delight in sin, and our hearts are as hard as the nether millstone; it is intended to bring apostate rebels back to God, and the universal practice of holiness; but we are estranged from him, and have no inclination to return. We abhor the ways of strict holiness, and choose to walk in the imaginations of our own hearts. The gospel is calculated to advance the divine glory, and abash the pride of all flesh, in the scheme of salvation which it reveals; but this is directly contrary to the disposition of the sinner, who is all for his own glory. This requires no tedious arguments to prove it. Look in upon your own hearts; look back on your own conduct; look around you on the world, and there

the evidences of it will glare upon you.

Now, since the innate dispositions of men are thus averse from the gospel, it is evident that nothing but divine power can make it effectual for their sanctification. Instructions may furnish the head with notions, and may correct speculative mistakes; but they have no power to sway the will and sweetly allure it to holiness. Persuasions may bring men to practice what they had omitted through mistake, carelessness, or a transient dislike; but they will have no effect, where the heart is full of enmity against the things recommended. In this case, he that planteth, and he that watereth, is nothing; it is God alone can give the increase.

It is however our duty to use the most vigorous endeavours, to obtain divine grace, because it is only in the use of vigorous endeavours, that we have reason to expect divine influences. These endeavours of ours do not in the least work those graces in us, and therefore there is as much need of the promised agency of divine grace, to effect the work, as if we should do nothing at all. Our utmost endeavours do not entitle us to divine assistance, and this we must have an humble sense of before we can receive the accomplishment of such promises, as the effect of free grace alone. But we should continue in these endeavours, because we have no reason to hope for the accomplishment of these promises in a course of sloth or negligence. God has promised, that while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest shall not cease—8 Gen. 22. But this promise does not render it needless for us to cultivate the earth; nor does all our cultivation render this promise needless. All our labour would

be in vain, without the influence of Divine Providence; and this influence is to be expected only in the use of labour. Just so in the moral world, the efficacy belongs to God, as much as if we made no use of means at all; and the most vigorous endeavours are as much our duty, as if we could effect the work ourselves, and He had no special hand in it. Were this remark properly attended to, it would guard us against the pernicious extremes of turning the grace of God into wantonness, and pleading it as an excuse for our idleness; and also of selfrighteousness and depending upon our own endeavours, in this guarded manner does St. Paul handle this point. "Work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

We have all of us had abundance of proof to convince us that it is not by power, nor by might, it is not by the eloquence, or demonstrations of man; but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts, that the interests of religion are carried on. Sometimes a clear, convictive and withal solemn and warm discourse, has no effect upon an individual, while at another time, the same doctrines, delivered in a weak, incoherent manner, have strange efficacy, and reach his heart. Sometimes the reading of a sermon has been the means of awakening careless sinners, when, at other times, the most solemn and argumentative preaching has been in vain. Sometimes we have seen a number of sinners thoroughly awakened, and bro't to seek the Lord in earnest; while another number, under the very same sermon, and who seemed as open to conviction as the former, or perhaps more so, have remained as secure and thoughtless, as usual.

And whence could this difference arise, but from divine grace? And indeed there is something in the manner of persons being affected with the word, which shows that the impression is not made by the word itself, or by any other power than divine. The truths that make such deep impressions upon their hearts, are no new discoveries; they are the old often repeated truths of the gospel, which they may have heard before a thousand times; and the manner in which they are represented by the minister, may not be clearer than usual. But, to their surprize, these familiar doctrines flash upon them as new discoveries; they appear to them in quite a different light, as though they had never heard them before; and they reach the conscience, and pierce the heart, with such amazing energy, that the sinner is frequently cast into a consternation at his own stupidity, that he never had such apprehensions of things before. He had been wont to regard the word as a speculation, but now he finds it living and powerful; the secrets of his heart are laid open by it, and he is obliged to own that God, is with it of a truth.

Many such instances as these occur, which prove, by matters of fact, that the success of the gospel, depends upon the influence of divine grace. But we need not observe others. If we will turn our eyes inwards, upon what has passed in our minds, our own experience proves the same thing. We all have found, that the very same truths affect us differently at different times. At one time they cause us to agonize under a sense of guilt, and to make many resolutions to change our course of life; and at another there is a stupid calm within, and we matter not all the con-

cerns of eternity. Some indeed go on serene and placid, till the flames of hell give them sensation; yet with many who seem hardened like clay, and hardly susceptible of any deep impressions at any time, this stale, neglected gospel, which has as yet made no impression on their stony hearts, may at length be endowed with almighty power, to break them into the tenderest contrition. O sinner, pray to Almighty God, that thou mayest yet fall under the resistless energy of these important things, which now appear but trifles to thee! Divine influence, which is offered to all, and is given in answer to fervent and earnest prayer, will cause the word of God, which has been all along a dead letter to you, to be Almighty, and to carry all before it, and make you feel it to be the word of God.

Look then up to God; apply to him for his influences to quicken your graces, and to animate you in your course. Cry to him for his grace to renew your nature, and to sanctify you. Not all the men, nor all the means upon earth, can be of any service to you, without Him. Carefully attend upon the Gospel, and upon all its institutions; but still be sensible, that these alone will not do; more is necessary—even the supernatural agency of divine grace. O how dangerous a thing it is to grieve the Spirit, and cause him to withdraw! Let us then indulge every good motion, entertain every solemn thought, cherish every pious resolution, and so as it were, invite the blessed agent to accomplish his work, instead of provoking Him to leave us.

Davie.

Margery's Letter.

Messrs. Editors,

I READ your work, and I hope have been edified by many of the

pieces which have appeared in it. Your directions and advice to newly awakened sinners are excellent; but there are those, who, when convinced of their sin and danger, are not at liberty to go according to your directions. Of this description there are indeed many, especially of my own sex, and surely they are entitled to the commiseration of every christian.

It has been truly said, we live in an enemy's country, and often those immediately about us, even of our own household, are the greatest enemies to our spiritual welfare and improvement. When any member of a family is brought to a deep and humbling conviction of his guilt and misery, and earnestly to desire a knowledge of the way of salvation, surely those who are supposed to be most tenderly attached to him, should delight, as it is their christian duty, to instruct him in the truth, and should urge him to the use of the proper means of obtaining the knowledge of God. But how often does the reverse of this happen! How often, at such a time, will the rest of the family labour to stifle such convictions; to prevail upon the sufferer to divert his thoughts from such subjects, and to forget, in the company of the careless and the fearless, the sorrows of his heart. How often do professing christians, nay communicants, act as if the salvation of the soul was unworthy to engage their attention.

The members of the church have often been reproached for their love of sinful amusements and dissipation, and although I am not one of those who would deprive the christian of all rational amusement, I cannot persuade myself that there is not, in this charge, too much of the truth. Indeed, it would seem to be the opinion of many, who profess

to be good church people, and who would be outrageous, if classed with unbelievers. that christians are under no obligation to observe some of the most plain and positive precepts of christianity—"Come out from the ungodly." "Crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts." "Redeeming the time"—seem with many to have no meaning at all, and if it be really true, that "a man is known by the company he keeps," what opinion must be entertained of many who profess to be followers of Christ, and attend with tolerable regularity the ordinances of his religion? By many who will not doubt that they are christians, those who think it dangerous to be "lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God," and are often to be seen in the house of prayer, but shun places of riot and dissipation, are denounced as the enemies of the church, as Methodists and hypocrites. Accordingly, in order to escape the censure and ridicule, and it may be, contempt of a considerable portion of those who hate an avowed infidel, it is absolutely necessary, not indeed to abstain from all evil, but to partake of all polite and fashionable amusements, and all polite and fashionable company; and, when with the worldly minded, to avoid all shew of religion, to talk as they talk, and act as they act.

We have indeed much reason to deplore the circumstance, that ours was once the established religion of the state. Not to mention the vicious clergymen, that owing to this circumstance we had among us, and whose evil principles and practices have been handed down from one generation to another; to this we are to attribute much of the christianity which is to be found among our church people. All who belonged to no other denomination,

had their children baptized by the clergy of our church, and of course, all who in the present day are not christians, but are unwilling to acknowledge themselves infidels, are considered members of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Hence it happens, that we have among us many who disgrace the church of which they are members, and this is the real cause of much of the evil reproach to which we are liable. Such people are considered as christians, and real christians can endure, that their children should associate with them. It is not then much to be wondered at, that we should find many of our brethren, who think it their duty to go, and who do go to church, and who sometimes read their bibles, and do many other religious acts, to be of the description of christians whom Hannah Moore styles "borderers," and who regulate their creed and their conversation by the company into which they chance to fall.

And oh! is it not horrid to think, that even communicants, after being engaged in the most solemn ordinance of our holy religion, will almost, as soon as they have retired from the altar, forget all their resolutions and obligations, lay aside the christian, and listen, and suffer their children to listen, with polite attention, to the "talking and jesting" of those, styled in Scripture "fools, who make a jest at sorrow for sin"—What must the unbeliever think of them, if when they ought to be engaged in family worship, and in holy meditation, they are murdering their precious time in such conversation, as must disgust the rational mind, and is death to every thing like religious feeling? When the thoughtless and unawakened discover, that the same conversation which suits themselves, is equally agreeable to the open pro-

fessors of christianity—when in the families of christians, they see nothing of family worship, and hear little, if any, religious conversation, can we wonder, that they should conclude, that the only real difference between christians and others, is that the former make professions, which the latter do not? What must children believe, notwithstanding all that their parents may say to them about religion, if prayer is omitted for the sake of company, or although it may not be entirely laid aside, yet it is postponed till an unreasonable hour, or it may be the high priest of the family retires from the family to have family prayer. Surely such christians are ashamed of Christ. Deplorable, in many families, is the condition of any person, who is awakened by the Spirit of God out of the sleep of death, and brought to feel an earnest solicitude for the soul's salvation. At such a time indeed, the directions which have been given in several of the numbers of your work, will instruct all who in truth desire the conversion of a sinner, what is to be done, and what is to be avoided. And those parents, and others, who are careful that they are followed, will enjoy the unspeakable happiness of having been instrumental in rescuing a soul from the bondage of sin and Satan. Let the terrified sinner be urged to shun society, to commune with his own heart, and in his own chamber, to seek the knowledge of God, in his word, and the assistance of his Holy Spirit in prayer. But alas! how different is the counsel often given, or at least suffered to be followed, at such a time, and how often is a poor half awakened sinner, by the most cruel mismanagement, kept from God, and driven to a state of yet greater misery and darkness!

Yes, often those who can behold with unconcern, a child, a brother, a sister, or a friend, in the bondage of iniquity, as soon as a desire is manifested to escape from the powers of darkness, become anxious and active, not indeed to bring the convicted sinner into a state of marvellous light, but to bring him back to the slavery of Satan. Of such unhappy cases, many instances have fallen under my own observation. This is frequently the unhappy lot of the male part of a family; it is yet more frequently the case with the "weaker sex." And indeed, how much is to be lamented the case of the latter! A man may escape from all who would thus labour to murder his soul; but as to a member of the female sex, if her family will oppose a desire in her to seek the knowledge of God, and his salvation, will urge her to stifle convictions, to dismiss her fears and uneasiness, and encourage her to seek in thoughtless company and amusement, the wretched peace which is there to be found, it is impossible for her, unless indeed she possess more firmness than is usually possessed, to make any progress. She is in the power of those around her, and how cruelly is that power generally exercised! Persecuted out of every religious feeling, not allowed to seclude herself from the gay, the giddy and the thoughtless, but forced to assume an air of cheerfulness, when the heart is all bitterness and anguish, is it to be wondered at that convictions should pass off, without any real conversion? Such instances often fall under the notice of the real christian, and it is owing to such cruel treatment that many who are baptized in our church, have been afterwards seduced from it. In this state of despondency, they are easily per-

suaded that the fault is in the church to which they belong, and in their state of restlessness and self-dissatisfaction, to believe, that they will find elsewhere, that peace and joy in believing, which in their own church, they have been unable to obtain; and in other religious communities, religious society, conversation, and instruction, which their own families and acquaintances do not afford.

Is it not time then to examine our ways, and that every professing christian should reform what is amiss? The evil is without remedy, unless more attention is paid to family worship, unless religion is more the subject of conversation in the domestic circle, and more care is taken that improper company, as well as improper conversation, be excluded from it. Above all, let parents look well to it, and be careful that they do not attempt to reproach others for their own crimes. While they neglect their duty, it is in vain to expect, that the exhortations of the preacher, or the devotions of the sanctuary, will produce any lasting effect. The whole counsel of God may be declared, all that can be said to wean the heart from the world and its vanities, and to set the affections upon heaven, may be urged, but will be urged in vain, while the impressions which are awakened in the house of God, are suffered to be effaced by the society, and conversation and amusements of the worldly-minded. The world, and all who love the world, and its vanities, must be given up by those, who desire the peace and the love of God. Between two opinions they must not halt; but if they would forsake the service of Satan, they must "come out from among those," who yet desire not the knowledge of God, or his ways, and would wait

till "a more convenient season," to repent of and forsake their sins. Let all who hope for salvation seriously consider these all important truths. Let them reflect that there are, and can be, no neutrals; that all who are not the friends, are the enemies of Christ; and let them flee from them, if they hope to escape the everlasting torments.

And oh! let those who are considered christians, who make open professions of religion, think what injury they do to the cause of christianity, by selecting for their associates, admitting into the society of their families, persons, who being without religion themselves, would weaken its impressions upon the hearts of others. It ought to be the delight of a minister of the gospel, to visit his flock, and what remorse it should awaken in any one of them, if the company, into which his visit would bring him, was such as to render his exhortations of none effect; if a word in season addressed to the family circle, would only expose him to the scoff and ridicule of those with whom he must associate if he would seek the society—of even his communicants.

Margery.

Growth in Grace.

CHRISTIANITY is intended to bring us to holiness; to make us holy like God, that we may be happy with him. If religion does not do this for us, it does nothing. Let us not however suppose, that it does this for us at once. No. Holiness is a gradual work. It is a work which cannot with any safety be left to stand still; for if it be not going forward, it is going backward.

In prosecuting this subject, I shall mention—

1st. Some false marks of growth in grace.

2d. Some true ones.

1. One false mark is an increase of religious knowledge. Persons think, because they know more than they did on religious matters, they are certainly becoming better christians. But knowledge may be placed only in the head or understanding, while grace must be seated in the heart or affections. True it is when a man is growing in grace, he will be growing in knowledge; but he may grow in knowledge without growing in grace. His knowledge may only serve to make him more proud.

Equally vain is the notion that we are growing in grace merely because we find an increasing pleasure in talking about religion, or in hearing others talk about it. When a man indeed becomes truly religious, he will find pleasure in discoursing on religious subjects and with religious people. But still men may talk well about religion, and take a pleasure in talking about it, when they have no religion. The same thing holds good with respect to hearing about religion. This love of hearing may arise from their having "itching ears," which lead them "to heap to themselves teachers."

Another false mark of growth in grace is a fancied zeal for God and religion. There may be "a zeal for God but not according to knowledge." His zeal may in fact be the zeal of maintaining his own opinions, or the zeal of promoting a party or sect in the church.

I now proceed to state—

2dly. Some true marks of growth in grace.

One real sign of our growing in grace is our growing in humility. Humility is the first of christian graces. And we are growing in

humility, when we are increasing in lowly thoughts of ourselves, of our pretensions and attainments; when we are daily learning to distrust more and more our understanding; when we find in ourselves an increasing readiness to listen to advice, to receive reproof with meekness and thankfulness.

Another proof of growth in grace, is an increasing habit of self-denial. By nature we are all self-willed. But grace teaches us a different lesson. It teaches us to deny ourselves, to resist and subdue this selfish principle in our hearts. And this victory over self, this mortification of our perverse and selfish will, is decidedly the work of that Holy Spirit, whose fruit is love, gentleness, and goodness.

Another true mark of growth in grace is an increasing simplicity and ingenuousness of mind. Men are naturally prone to falsehood and deception. But grace opposes itself to every thing of this kind. It condemns, and abhors all falsehood and duplicity, and insincerity of every kind.

Another mark is a growing tenderness of conscience. Men in their natural state have little or no fear of sinning. Grace teaches them to fear sin, and to dread offending God. Many others might be mentioned. These are the most plain and useful.

When the Apostle exhorts you to grow in grace, he bids you to use those means by which the end will be most certainly attained. Those means are secret prayer, private study of the word of God, and serious self-examination. Of course, it is supposed that they are accompanied with a regular attendance on the public ordinances of religion, which no man, who would grow in grace, can safely neglect. Grace is

best increased in the soul, not by using one of the means of grace, to the neglect of the rest, but by using all of them in their proper season, order and proper time. Be earnest then, be frequent, be regular in the use of these means. *Cooper.*

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Gisborne on Enthusiasm.

By enthusiasm, as applied with a reference to religion, I understand the subjection of the judgment, in points of religious faith and practice, to the influence of the imagination. The power which it exercises over one mind, may in degree be greater or less than that which it possesses over another. But wherever, and in whatever shape and measure, it operates, there and in that shape and measure exists enthusiasm.

In many instances, enthusiasm suggests unauthorised ideas of personal communication between the individual and the Deity; of personal inspiration sensibly vouchsafed by the Holy Ghost, in mode or measure different from that divine influence on the heart and understanding, which is promised to every christian. And not seldom it impels pious men to carry their views of a particular doctrine beyond the sober tenor of the Scriptural declarations concerning that doctrine.

Enthusiasm entails a woe on the person whom it infects. It darkens his understanding; it enslaves him more and more to the dreams of a heated fancy; it teaches him to judge whether he is in a state of salvation, rather by internal impulses and reveries, than by a comparison of his own dispositions and conduct, with the characteristic marks by which the Scriptures discriminate the true christian; and thus contributes in various ways to

ensnare him into errors dangerous to his soul, and to increase the difficulties in the way of his return, to the form of sound doctrine, the words of truth and soberness. But its pernicious effects on others; the mischiefs scattered far and wide by this evil, called good, are incalculable. Enthusiasm disparages genuine piety, and causes it to be despised as lukewarm formality. It disgusts the sober, and discourages the timid christian. It exposes christianity to the scoffs and taunts of its enemies; and furnishes a specious plea to the children of this world, who labour to represent earnestness in religion, as hypocrisy, folly or fanaticism.

It is said, and truly said, that sincere piety is often an inmate in the breast which is the habitation of enthusiasm. It is to be deplored that sincere piety should ever be linked with an associate, by the continued operation of whose deluding influence, it has frequently been at last extirpated from the bosom. Let sincere piety, however, be honoured wherever it may be found. But let not the chaff be valued, because of its conjunction with the wheat. Let not the base alloy be counted as a portion of the precious metal.

It is also stated, and occasionally in the shape of an apology, that enthusiasm originates from ignorance, unaccompanied by evil design. Let every man who urges this, in the first place weigh the language of St. Paul, when that Apostle describes himself as the "chief of sinners;" and observe secondly, that he attributes his sin to ignorance. I would fervently exhort you to deduce from the expressions of St. Paul, the legitimate and universally applicable conclusion; that ignorance, when you are

surrounded, with means and opportunities of knowledge, is wilful; that wilful ignorance is a sin; and that there is no offence for which wilful ignorance can be pleaded in justification.

Conversation of Professing Christians.

FAR from having "the Spirit of Christ," or desiring to have it, there are many, even among the professors of christianity, who are quite enraged against those to whom it has pleased the Lord to give his Spirit, and fancy that they do God service, when they exclaim against them as enthusiasts, fools, and madmen, hereby plainly proving themselves to be none of Christ's, but to be of those natural men who cannot receive the things of the spirit of God.

Moreover, when we are so strictly enjoined to exhort one another daily; to be holy in all manner of conversation; and to let our communication be to the use of edifying, fit to minister grace unto the hearers; is it not amazing, that multitudes of souls should be so infatuated, as to fancy themselves to be in a safe state, whilst they live in a total neglect of these express commands, and can sit and rack their inventions to rake up all the nonsensical chat of the town, and had rather talk for hours together on the most trifling subjects, than upon the one thing needful; insomuch that religious conversation is almost the only kind of discourse that is excluded, not only in public companies, but even among most intimate friends, in their more retired hours.

I know there are some who will never open their lips about religion in their conversation with others, because truly they are afraid of disgusting them. But indeed that man

can hardly be said to be a christian, who lies in the neglect of so material a branch of his duty, as that of brotherly admonition must be allowed to be, as well in private christians as in ministers. It is not necessary, indeed, that a christian should stun with religious discourse, people in whom he perceives an utter aversion from it. But when they offer, let him not cruelly neglect the opportunities of being useful to their immortal souls; and let him bear it in mind, that he has cause to fear being himself hurt by the conversation of those who will not be benefitted by his conversation.

Was the whole of what passes at most of our modern visits, to be taken down in writing, and afterwards sent to the press, under the title of "An evening's conversation amongst a company of professed christians, who are called upon to let their communication be to the use of edifying, fit to minister grace unto the hearers," I leave you to judge what kind of a mixture it would be. Yet it is entirely for want of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, our Lord, and of that inexhaustible fund for conversation, which his dying love furnishes every christian, that so many are taken up in hearing and relating the follies and miseries of every neighbouring family, and an account of every trifling occurrence since they met last; whilst all the glorious truths of redemption, are as much kept out of sight, as if they were the lies of mercenary priests, or the disgrace of human nature. There cannot be a more dismal sign that there is not a spark of religion in such hearts; for where the treasure is, there will the heart be also, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The glutton's delight is to talk of eating;

the drunkard's of drinking; the sportsman of his horses and dogs; the most agreeable topics to a giddy, vain, worldly-minded woman, are dress and diversions, and the christian is never so happy as when discoursing about the things of God, and his soul. This is the infallible touchstone whereby we may try ourselves, and woe unto those whose hearts condemn them in this respect.

Seest thou one who is wise in his own conceit? (says Solomon). There is more hope of a fool than of him. The foundation of our reconciliation with God, must be laid in a deep heartfelt humiliation, arising from a thorough sense of our original and actual guilt. Till this be the case, it is impossible we can have any true longings after the blessings of redemption. Merely nominal christians may indeed be pure in their own eyes, and yet are not cleansed from their filthiness. Of them, it is said by holy David, "thou hatest instruction, and casteth my words behind thee." They are thus described, and the following tremendous sentence is pronounced against them, by our Lord himself, from the mouth of his holy Angel—"I know thy works, thou art neither cold nor hot; so then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth; because thou sayest, I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Anon.

*From Knox's Christian Philosophy.
On the means of obtaining the Evidences of Christianity afforded by the Holy Spirit.*

FAITH is the gift of God. To the giver only it belongs to prescribe

the means of obtaining his bounty. He has prescribed the written word, and prayer. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." But the whole tone of the gospel proves that even the written word has not efficacy of itself to convince our understandings, nor reform our hearts; to produce either faith in God or repentance from dead works, without the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Now the aid of the Holy Ghost is promised to prayer—to "them that ask Him"—an easy condition of obtaining the greatest comfort of which the heart of man is capable, together with full evidence of the truths of christianity.

But do the inquirers into the truth of christianity seek its evidence in this manner? Do they fall on their knees, and lift up their hearts in supplication? No, they trust to their own power, rather than to the power of God. They take down their folios, they have recourse to their logic, their metaphysics and even their mathematics. Many undertake to demonstrate, almost geometrically, the truth of christianity.

He that would be a christian indeed, and not merely a talker about christianity, must seek better evidence than man, ignorant as he is with the deepest learning, can by any means afford. He must "open his mouth and draw in the Spirit." The Holy Spirit will give him "the spirit of supplication," which will breathe out in prayer. He must continue instant in prayer. This will preserve his mind in a state fit to receive the Holy Visitant from on high, who brings with him balsam for the heart, and light for the understanding.